

502-23

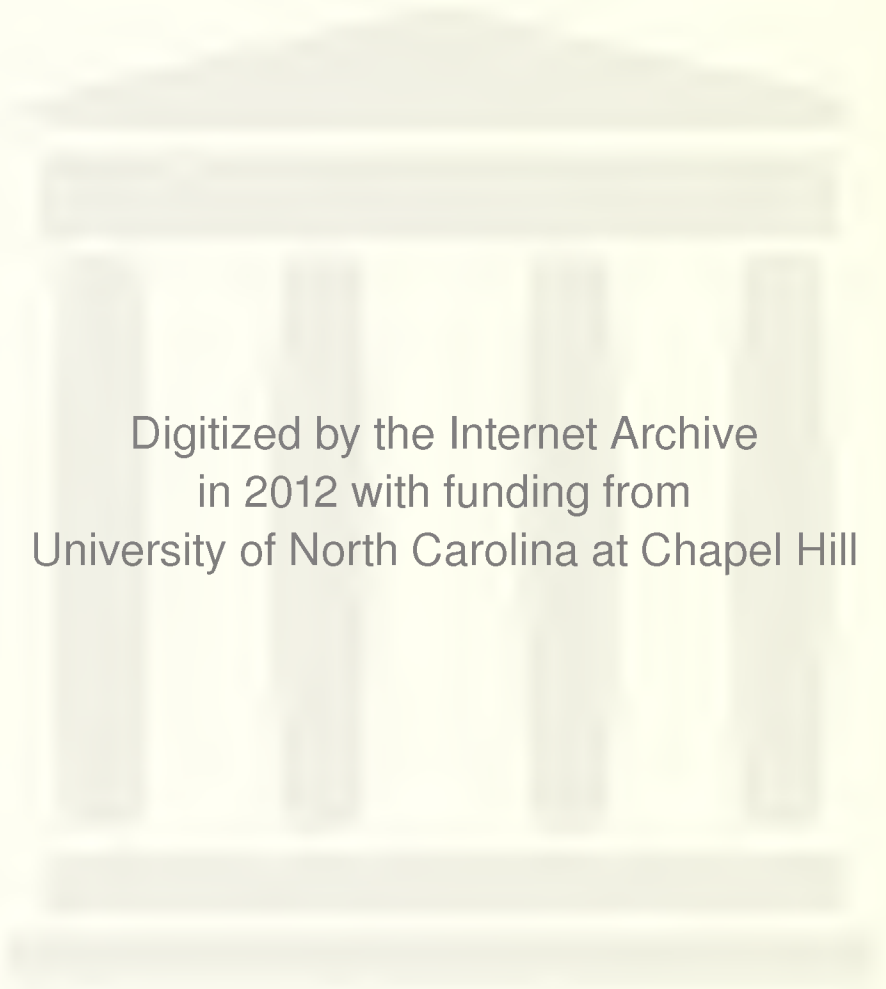
General

DANIEL MORGAN:

Reconsidered
Hero



By Richard L. Morgan, Ph.D.
Burke County Historical Society



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

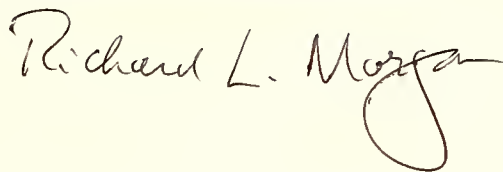
<http://archive.org/details/generaldanielmor00morg>

GENERAL DANIEL MORGAN

Reconsidered Hero

by

Richard L. Morgan, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Richard L. Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Morgan" clearly legible, and the middle initial "L." in between. The signature is positioned below the printed name.

**Burke County Historical Society
Morganton, North Carolina**

Copyright, 2001, by Richard L. Morgan, Ph.D.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior permission of Richard L. Morgan.

Published by Burke County Historical Society, P. O. Box 151, Morganton, North Carolina 28680

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	iv
Preface.....	v
Life of Daniel Morgan.....	ix
I. Mysterious Childhood, 1736-1753.....	1
II. The Old Wagoner, 1753-1775.....	5
III. Revolutionary Rifleman, 1775-1777.....	11
IV. A Devil of a Whipping, 1777-1781.....	21
V. Saratoga and Final Days, 1800-1802.....	31
VI. Daniel Morgan: Reconsidered Hero.....	39
Appendices	
I. Genealogy of Daniel Morgan.....	47
II. Military Career of Daniel Morgan.....	48
III. Further Reading.....	49

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the three existing biographies of General Morgan: James Graham, *The Life of General Morgan of the Virginia Line of the Army of the United States* (1856); North Callahan, *Daniel Morgan: Ranger of the Revolution* (1961); and Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman* (1961) for their scholarly biographies of Morgan. I am also indebted to Park Ranger Scott Withrow for his monograph on the *Battle of Cowpens* and Lawrence E. Babits for his excellent treatment of the Battle of Cowpens in *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (1998).

I would also like to acknowledge the hospitality of the Clarke County Historical Society, the Winchester/Frederick Historical Society, and Carl and Eileen Stephanus, who graciously toured me through "Soldier's Rest," outside of Berryville, Virginia.

My thanks to the Burke County Historical Society and its president, Dottie Ervin, for sponsoring this monograph and to Frances Manderson, Executive Director of Historic Burke Foundation for her editorial assistance in compiling this work. My hope is that those who read these pages will develop a genuine appreciation of this major hero of the War of Independence and acknowledge his importance for the town named for him. His story reminds us of St. Paul's words, "*I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.*"

Richard L. Morgan
Morganton, North Carolina

Preface

It has been 40 years since the last biography of General Daniel Morgan was written. Daniel Morgan still remains the “forgotten general,” not well known outside of his home ground in the Shenandoah Valley, or around the South Carolina battlefields. In the recent *Macmillan Dictionary of Military History*, (Macmillan, 1998) he is not even mentioned--a glaring omission when one considers Morgan’s brilliance at the Battle of Cowpens.

The year 2002 marks the bicentennial of Morgan’s death on July 6, 1802. The town of Morganton, North Carolina, the only town in the United States named for Morgan, will celebrate the life of this true American patriot.

Not many people realize that the town of Morganton, North Carolina, holds the distinction of being the only town in the United States named for Daniel Morgan, Revolutionary War hero and patriot.¹

Not many citizens of Morganton know why the town was named for Daniel Morgan, or anything about his life story. In 1784, Alexander Erwin, Thomas Blanton, and Charles McDowell were instrumental in naming this town “Morgansborough,” in honor of the hero of Cowpens. No doubt the Burke militia, led by Major Joseph McDowell and Major Alexander Erwin, who fought with Morgan at Cowpens played a major role in the naming of the town. In 1822, a supplemental act changed the name of the town to “Morganton.”²

What do we know of this “forgotten general,” a true patriot of the American struggle for independence? An aura of mystery still surrounds Morgan’s early life. In Morgan’s later years, the Reverend William Hill, pastor of the Old Stone Presbyterian Church of Winchester, Virginia, became Morgan’s pastor and confidant. He intended to write a biography, based on stories Morgan told him, but he never completed the task. All that remains is his

¹There are nine U. S. counties named for General Morgan in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Morgantown, W. Va., was named for Zaquill Morgan, and Morgantown, Pa. was named for Jacob Morgan.

²John T. Wheeler, in his *Historical Sketch of North Carolina* (1851) states that the capital of Burke County is called in compliment of Daniel Morgan, born in Pennsylvania.

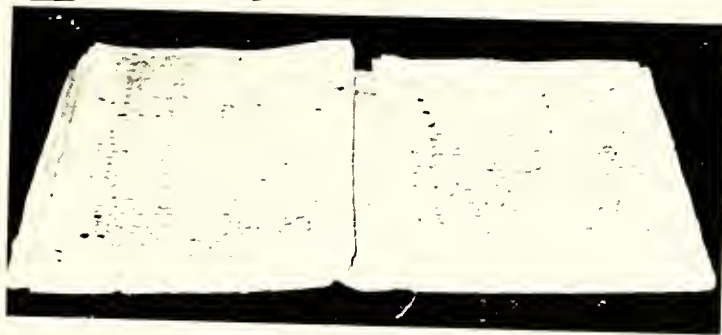
handwritten outline, housed in the library of Union Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) in Richmond, Virginia. Even a cursory look at Hill's outline leaves one with the impression that we would know more if the biography had ever been written.

HILL'S OUTLINE OF MORGAN'S STORY

- 1 How my acquaintance with Genl Morgan commenced, & to what extent it was carried afterwards.
- 2 The family & early days of Genl M--
- 3 When he came to Va & in what circumstances--
- 4 His first employment, & the kind of life he led--
- 5 His person & figure--temperament, & disposition--
- 6 His first employment in the British army, & treatment.
- 7 His entering Braddock army in some subordinate office
- 8 Being sent on some scouting party--fell in an ambuscade & dreadfully wounded but narrowly escaped--
- 9 After Fort Duchesne was taken & peace made Genl M-- returned to his old neighborhood, & engaged in some employment or other for a livelihood, was industrious and saving, but fond at times of frolick & sports, but was still economical--& saving--
- 10 His feats at Battletown--His loose habits--
- 11 With his saving he bought a small tract of land & turned it to good acct--
- 11 [sic] He now corrected some of his loose habits, improved his mind & defective education & moved in a better circle
- 12 [sic] He married which had a happy effect upon his after life--His wife a plain industrious sensible & pious woman--

The earliest biography of Morgan was written in 1856 by the Rev. James Graham, who married Morgan's great-granddaughter.

- 1 How my acquaintance with Genl Morgan commenced, & to what extent it was carried afterwards.
- 2 The family & early days of Genl M -
- 3 When he came to Va & in what circumstances -
- 4 His first employment, & the kind of life he led -
- 5 His person & figure - Temperament, & disposition -
- 6 His first employment in the British army, & treatment.
- 7 His entering Broadbent's army in some subordinate offi.
- 8 Being sent on some scouting party - fell in an ambush & dreadfully wounded but narrowly escaped -
- 9 After Fort Buchanan was taken & peace made Genl M - returned to his old neighborhood, & engaged in some employment or other for a livelihood, was industrious & saving, but fond at times of frolic & sports, but was still economical - & saving -
- 10 His sports at Battleground - His loose habits -
- 11 With his saving he bought a small tract of land & turned it to good use -
- 11 He now corrected some of his loose habits, improved his mind & defective education & moved in a better circle
- 12 He married which had a happy effect upon his after life - His wife a plain industrious sensible & pious woman -



Outline of the life of General Daniel Morgan by the Reverend William Hill in the archives of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

MORGAN'S LIFE BOUND UP IN TRANSITIONS

In every person's life there are crucial points that, from that moment onward, alter the course of his or her life. Looking back, we realize these are turning points, that how we responded to these moments of crisis defined who we are. These transitions take us from endings, through emptiness and darkness, to fresh life and new beginnings. Never was this truer than in the life of Daniel Morgan. From his flight to Virginia at the age of 17 to his final days at Winchester, Virginia, Daniel Morgan experienced many transitions.

LIFE OF DANIEL MORGAN

- 1736 Born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania (possibly Hunterdon County, New Jersey)
- 1753 Left home, traveled the Old Wagon Road to Charlestown, Virginia
- 1754 Became a wagoner, delivering supplies in the Valley of Virginia. Washington and Boone were also involved.
- 1755 Served as a wagoner at Braddock's defeat at Fort Duquesne.
- 1757 Joined the British Army with an ensign's commission.
- 1758 Brawler, gambler, Indian fighter (Battletown, Virginia).
- 1759 Moved to Winchester, Virginia, and lived with Abigail Curry.
- 1763 Served as lieutenant in Pontiac's Conspiracy.
- 1763 -73 Lived with Abigail Curry at "Soldier's Rest " near present town of Berryville, Virginia. Two daughters, Nancy and Betsy, born during this period.
- 1773 Married Abigail Curry
- 1775 Joined the Continental Army with a commission as Captain of the Virginia Riflemen. Marched his men 600 miles to Massachusetts. Left Fort Western for the Canadian Expedition, was present at the Battle of Quebec on December 31. Imprisoned and released on parole in 1776.
- 1777 Morgan's riflemen played major role in Battle of Saratoga.
- 1780 Named brigadier general and returned to southern campaign.
- 1781 Won major victory over Tarleton at Cowpens.
- 1781 Returned to his home at "Saratoga" near Boyce, Virginia.
- 1782 Managed Burwell-Morgan Mill in Milltown, Virginia.
- 1794 Repelled the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania.
- 1797-99 Served in U. S. Congress
- 1800 Health failed; moved to home on Amherst Street in Winchester, Virginia
- 1800 Friendship with the Reverend William Hill, pastor of Old Stone Presbyterian Church, Winchester.
- 1801 Baptized.
- 1802 Died July 6th. (William Hill preached funeral oration; buried in cemetery of Old Stone Church; remains moved to Mount Hebron Cemetery, Winchester, in 1868.)

CHAPTER I
MYSTERIOUS CHILDHOOD
1736-1753

Morgan was reluctant to talk about his past; indeed, he told few if any of his friends the identity of his parents, the place of his birth, and the location of his home before reaching Frederick County.

Don Higginbotham

In the spring of 1753, a tall, strong, young man about 17 years old strode into Charlestown, Virginia. He was poor and could not read or write. He had little but the clothes on his back and a determination to make something out of his life. He revealed little about his past, or the family from which he came. But Daniel Morgan's mysterious past and subsequent rise to fame in the Revolutionary War strike an almost mythical note. He was the true American individual who came from nowhere and established himself as an authentic hero.

Morgan was born in the winter of 1736. During the exchange of prisoners in 1776, it is reported that Morgan told the British officers in charge of handling his exchange that he was 40 years old. This marked his birthday in the year 1736. Apparently, his parents were James and Eleanor Morgan, Welsh Quaker immigrants who had come to America in 1720 and settled in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. His father was an iron master, and soon after Daniel was born, the family moved across the Delaware River to Hunterdon County, New Jersey.³ Morgan never spoke of his parents or his family. Apparently, his mother died when he was a small boy, and his father remarried. At the age of 17, Daniel had a severe quarrel with his father and ran away from home. He fled southward down the Great Wagon Road, which began in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, turned southward to Frederick, Maryland, ran through Winchester, Virginia,

³ Some historians speculate that Daniel Morgan was the grandson of Edward Morgan of Wales, whose sister was Sarah Morgan, mother of Daniel Boone, thus making Daniel Boone and Daniel Morgan cousins. Sarah Morgan had a brother named Daniel who was present at her marriage. This Daniel Morgan was married to Elizabeth Roberts under the care of the Gywnedd Friends Meeting on September 2, 1718. Susan K. Morikawa, Archivist of the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore, Pa., wrote, "There never has been any documentation to support the connection that would make Daniel Boone and Daniel Morgan first cousins, and it seems unlikely." (Letter to the author, August 20, 1999). Boone and Morgan *may* have met when they were in Braddock's command in the French and Indian War. Others claim that Daniel Morgan was the son of Captain Richard Morgan of Frederick County, Virginia. However, the best guess is that James and Eleanor Morgan were his parents. Both Virginia and Pennsylvania claim Morgan as a native son. See Joseph F. Folsom, "General Daniel Morgan's Birthplace and Life," New Jersey Historical Society, *Proceedings*, New Ser. 14 (1929), pp. 277-91.

and ended at the Yadkin River in North Carolina. The gangling six-foot, 200-pound young man hired himself out as a farm worker, and in less than a year had earned enough trust from his employer to be put in charge of Burwell's sawmill. By the age of 19, he set himself up as an independent wagoner, and hauled produce from the backwoods over the mountains. A restless, high-spirited young man, Morgan enjoyed the freedom of wagoning, and he also liked the company of John Ashby, a skilled horseman, marksman, pugilist, and rum-drinker. Despite good times with Ashby, Morgan saved most of his salary, so that within a year he was able to purchase a team and enter the hauling business for himself. In fact, Morgan's favorite title for himself was "The Old Waggoner."

CHAPTER II

THE OLD WAGONER

1773-1775

“Did not Quebec, Saratoga and the Cowpens make it sufficiently manifest that Daniel Morgan had something in his nature above rattling dice on a tavern table, or bullying the young men of a country town?”

“He was never known to sacrifice truth for conventionality.”

James Graham

In his youthful days Morgan was a brawler and heavy drinker. His favorite hangout was a tavern near Battletown, Virginia, (the present Berryville, Virginia) a place that must have gotten its name from the numerous brawls that occurred there. Morgan was a hell-raiser and tavern brawler who loved a fist fight. He joked, clowning, loved rum, enjoyed cards, wore Indian attire, and had a common-law wife.

However, the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754 cut short his career as an independent wagoner. That year, French troops pressing down from Canada erected Fort Duquesne at the fork of the Ohio, then defeated George Washington's Virginia militiamen who had hoped to drive them away. Early in 1755, Major Edward Braddock arrived in Virginia with two regiments of regulars to combat the French. Daniel Morgan learned of an appeal for wagoners to transport provisions to Braddock's advance base at Fort Cumberland, Maryland, and was engaged by Braddock to accompany his army.

Either before or after Braddock's march to Fort Duquesne, a British officer or enlisted man so angered Morgan that he knocked the Briton down, and a drum-beat court martial sentenced Morgan to receive 500 lashes. Despite the fact that other men had died enduring such an ordeal, Morgan was too tough to die. Counting with the drummer, Morgan heard him miscount, but "did not think it worthwhile to tell him of his mistake, and so let it go." Morgan later would not have taken anything for the whipping. During that long January night before the battle at Cowpens, Morgan went from camp to camp, showing the patriots his scars, and telling them that he owed King George one! Later the young officer apologized to Morgan, and Morgan accepted his apology. Morgan told this story in his later years to the Reverend William Hill, who wrote:

Upon one occasion while assisting in changing his linen, I discovered his back to be covered with scars and ridges from his shoulders to his waist. 'General,' said I, 'What had been the matter with your back?' 'Ah,' replied he, 'that is the doings of old King George. While I was in his service, upon a certain occasion, he promised to give me 500 lashes. But he failed in his promise and gave me but 499; so he has been owing me one lash

ever since.' While the drummer was laying them on my back I heard him miscount one. I was counting after him all the time. I did not think it worth while to tell him of his mistake, and let it go so.

Braddock was ambushed by a French and Indian force, and met a humiliating defeat. Morgan witnessed this fiasco, and finally, on July 11, the mortally wounded Braddock met his end.

In April 1756, Morgan led a militia contingent from Fort Ashby to Fort Edwards, 20 miles north of Winchester. Suddenly seven Indians sprang from ambush and opened fire, killing Morgan's companion. A musket ball tore into Morgan's neck and passed out through his cheek, dislodging several teeth. Somehow Morgan survived, but the wound left a permanent scar on his face.⁴

In 1763, Morgan claimed a sweetheart, Miss Abigail Curry, the daughter of a relatively prosperous Frederick County farmer. She became his "common-law wife," and they set up housekeeping.

In the 1760's two daughters, Nancy and Betsy, were born to this union. Abigail was "plain, sensible, and pious," and had a genuine interest in religion which influenced Morgan. In 1800, Abigail Morgan became one of 40 charter members of the Old Stone Presbyterian church in Winchester, the church which Morgan joined a year later. Morgan was later buried in the church's cemetery on July 6, 1802.

Abigail taught Morgan to read and write, and persuaded him to have nothing more to do with his rowdy friends. Her love and understanding drew him away from his carousing comrades. On March 30, 1773, due to the persuasion of the Anglican vicar, Charles Thurston, Morgan and Abigail Curry were married.

According to Don Higginbotham, somewhere between 1769 and 1772,

⁴ James Graham, *Life of General Morgan of the Virginia Army of the United States*, pp. 33-34.



SOLDIER'S REST
 HAS BEEN PLACED IN THE
 NATIONAL REGISTER
 OF HISTORIC PLACES
 BY THE UNITED STATES
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 CIRCA 1780

"Soldier's Rest," near Berryville, Va., where Daniel Morgan and his wife, Abigail, lived.

Morgan purchased a 255-acre tract from Abigail's uncle, Sam Blackburn.⁵ Situated three miles north of Battletown and eleven miles east of Winchester, it was near the land Morgan had previously rented and not far from the home of Abigail's father, Daniel Curry. Morgan named that home "Soldier's Rest." Historians of Clarke County today raise serious questions about whether Daniel Morgan ever really lived there.⁶

In 1771, Morgan, who had become a prosperous farmer, was appointed as a militia captain. But the drums of war from afar would soon disrupt his peaceful life and propel him into battles which would later make him one of the great patriots of the American Revolution.

⁵ Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman*, p.13; Higginbotham shows how the transaction caused many difficulties for Morgan which raised doubts whether Morgan ever lived at "Soldier's Rest." Some believe he continued to live on rented land nearby.

⁶ According to Mary Morris, archivist at the Clarke County Historical Society, land records indicate that Daniel Morgan purchased "Soldier's Rest" and sold it in two months, apparently as surety for a debt. Morgan may well have lived at this location, but as a renter, not an owner (telephone conversation with the author, July 9, 2001).



Daniel Morgan in Ranger Uniform, Courtesy of New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

CHAPTER III

REVOLUTIONARY RIFLEMAN

1775 - 1777

“The hero is known for having done something; the celebrity is known for being known.”

Robert Penn Warren

On April 19, 1775, the “shot heard ‘round the world,” fired at Lexington, Massachusetts, became yet another turning point in the life of Daniel Morgan. Seven hundred British routed 70 militiamen on the town green. The British then marched on to Concord, where 200 minutemen took position on the far side of the Old North Bridge. Several men on both sides were killed or wounded; the British troops fell back and began a retreat to Boston.

News of the event immediately began spreading, reaching Charleston, South Carolina, by May 10, 1775. On this same date, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys from Vermont, along with Benedict Arnold, captured Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain.

In June of 1775, the Continental Congress approved the formation of a Continental Army, and George Washington was officially approved to become Commander-in-Chief. A call went out to the colonies, and on June 14, Congress voted to raise ten companies of “expert riflemen,” six from Pennsylvania, two from Maryland, and two from Virginia.

When the lawmakers called on Frederick County to provide one Virginia company, the patriot committee unanimously elected Daniel Morgan captain of the unit. Although Morgan disliked leaving his family and farm, he nevertheless was honored by his appointment and named his regiment “Morgan’s Raiders.”

Morgan then rode throughout the county recruiting his riflemen, and he finally accepted 96 recruits. These riflemen, mainly in their early twenties, were dressed in long hunting shirts, leggings, and moccasins. Morgan himself wore Indian clothing and carried a new rifle. Morgan marched these backwoodsmen over 600 miles from Winchester to Cambridge, Massachusetts. This bee-line march to Boston ended with a review by George Washington. According to some accounts, when Washington first saw Morgan and his men, he stopped before their line and dismounted from his horse. He is said to have gone along the line, shaking hands with every man, his eyes filled with tears.⁷ For six weeks Morgan’s riflemen remained inactive at Cambridge. But things would soon change.

⁷ Daniel Callahan, *Daniel Morgan, Ranger of the Revolution*, pp. 49-50.

THE QUEBEC EXPEDITION

On September 25, 1775, Morgan and his riflemen set off on a secret expedition into the howling Canadian wilderness. Morgan, at the age of 39, and his rangers marched 350 miles in 60 days across the rugged Maine terrain. Washington's plan was to neutralize British power in Canada, and make it a fourteenth colony.

Washington's plan involved a two-pronged attack led by General Richard Montgomery and Colonel Benedict Arnold. Higginbotham states, "Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the Canadian venture was that Arnold's men ever reached Quebec. The credit for their arrival...belongs largely to Arnold, and to a less extent, to his subordinate, Morgan."⁸ Two months after it began, the expedition had thinned down from 1,050 able-bodied soldiers to 675.

On November 10, Morgan's men camped on the St. Lawrence River, within view of Quebec. On a snowy January first, Arnold and Morgan began their assault on Quebec. British Major General Sir Guy Carleton repelled the invaders; Montgomery was killed and Arnold barely escaped with a few men.

It was Morgan who scaled the wall of the city and fell on a cannon, which no doubt saved him from British bayonets. The British had regrouped and surrounded Morgan's column in the narrow street, and defeat was imminent. James Graham described that dramatic moment in Quebec on that snowy day in the first biography of Daniel Morgan:

Such was Morgan's vexation upon realizing the hopelessness of his situation that, he wept like a child. On being summoned by some of his enemy's soldiery to deliver up his sword, he peremptorily refused a compliance, but placing his back against a wall, with the weapon in his hand, he dared any one of their number to come and take it...At length a man near at hand, whom he took by his dress to be a clergyman,

⁸ Higginbotham, *Morgan*, p. 27.

he asked him if he was not a priest. Being answered in the affirmative, Morgan delivered his sword to the clergyman observing, 'Then I give my sword to you; but a scoundrel of these cowards shall not take it out of my hands.'⁹

Morgan was imprisoned in a comfortable seminary in January 1776. Three months later, a plot to escape among the prisoners was discovered by the British. Then the Americans were clapped in irons and thrown into the old Dauphin jail for four months.

One of General Carleton's subordinates, possibly McKenzie or Carleton's brother, Major Carleton, tried to convince Morgan that he could gain nothing from his struggle with the mother country, and suggested he could be a colonel in the British army. As Morgan told the story to William Hill in his later years, he told the officer that his services were not for sale. He was no "rascal."¹⁰

On August 7, Carleton capitulated to Morgan's demand that he be released, and on August 11, he set sail for home. When the ship landed at Elizabethtown Point, New Jersey, Morgan lay prone on the earth, sobbing aloud, "Oh, my country." Morgan reported to Washington's headquarters and later was promoted to the rank of colonel. He returned to his home, "Soldier's Rest," where he found his wife and children in good health. In late 1776, a courier arrived in Frederick County and delivered Morgan's commission as Colonel of the 11th Virginia Regiment. Having raised a force of 180 men, Morgan reached Washington's camp at Morristown, New Jersey, around the beginning of April 1777.

MORGAN AT SARATOGA

The classic painting by John Trumbull of the Battle of Saratoga, October 1777, depicts Colonel Daniel Morgan standing next to General Horatio Gates as Johnny Burgoyne, the British General, surrenders his sword. Benedict Arnold

⁹ Graham, *op cit.*, p. 103. (Based on notes of Rev. William Hill.)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.



The Surrender of General Burgoyne, 17 October 1777, by John Trumbull.
Courtesy of U. S. Capitol Historical Society, Washington. (Colonel Daniel Morgan of the Virginia Riflemen stands at the left hand of General Horatio Gates as Lieutenant General John Burgoyne surrenders at Saratoga.

was nowhere to be found, as he lay in his tent recovering from his wounds. Morgan never received credit for his role in this strategic American victory that brought France into the war on the side of the colonists.

Washington, well aware of Morgan's abilities, used his rifle corps throughout the winter and spring as light infantry to harry the British foragers and rear guard. By late summer, the Americans faced a major threat in New York as British General John Burgoyne marched from Canada with the intention of seizing the Hudson River, thus dividing New England from the rest of the colonies.

General Horatio Gates was dispatched to organize and lead the American resistance, and Colonel Morgan with his rifle corps accompanied him by special request. In October 1777, the two armies clashed near Saratoga, New York, in a two-day battle which many historians claim was the turning point of the Revolution. On September 19, Gates had won the Battle of Freeman's Farm (First Saratoga) at a heavy price. On October 7, the American forces defeated the British at Bemis Heights (Second Battle of Saratoga). Burgoyne surrendered on October 17. It is worth noting that Gates did not engage in the battle, but left the fighting to Daniel Morgan and Benedict Arnold. Morgan led a flanking movement to the British right that, with Arnold's coordinating movement on the left, wrapped up the entire army and forced Burgoyne to surrender. Morgan's 500 rangers were deadly snipers, wielding Kentucky long rifles with a range of 200 yards, twice that of muskets.

One wonders why Morgan is never mentioned in Gates' dispatches to Congress and why he never received the credit he so richly deserved. Morgan's name is not even mentioned in the official account of the surrender. James Graham relates the reason, no doubt garnered from Hill's memories of Morgan's life. Apparently Gates told Morgan that the main army was extremely dissatisfied with the conduct of the war by General Washington, and that several of Gates' officers threatened to resign unless a change took place. According to Hill, Morgan replied, "I have one favor to ask of you, sir, which is, never to mention that detestable subject to me again; for under no other man than Washington, as commander-in-chief, would I ever serve."¹¹

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173. (Based on Hill's memoirs.)

Gates himself entertained strong hopes of replacing Washington, and he solicited Morgan's support. Daniel Morgan was loyal to Washington, and his refusal to join in this conspiracy caused him to fall out of favor with Gates. Gates snubbed Morgan by not inviting him to a dinner he gave for the principal officers of the British army. This initiated a long period of alienation between Gates and Morgan which did not end until the spring of 1781.

MORGAN IN THE MIDDLE COLONIES AND RETURN TO VIRGINIA

At the request of Washington, Morgan marched southward from Saratoga. One account claims that Morgan stopped in northern New Jersey to see "his brother, whom he had not seen for many years, and who, he learned, was in extreme indigence." According to this account, Morgan had not seen his brother for 20 years, and during the visit had to sleep on the bare floor, "his brother having but one bed in his house."¹²

Morgan hastened to the headquarters of Washington at Whitmarsh, Pennsylvania, arriving there on November 18, 1777. In late December, Washington moved his army to Valley Forge, where they endured the bitter winter of 1778. Morgan and his corps were placed on the west side of the Schuylkill River and were often engaged in Indian-style fighting around Philadelphia.

Army politics began to play a major role in yet another transition in the life of Daniel Morgan. Morgan felt his accomplishments had earned him a promotion and a larger command; a special brigade of light infantry was then forming, and he wanted it. Higginbotham says that two factors mitigated against him: (1) The new body was of adequate strength for a brigadier general, and (2) Second Brigadier General Anthony Wayne had been replaced as commander of the Pennsylvania line and threatened to resign if not given this new command.¹³ Jamie B. Cheaney adds that "The problem: he was a Virginian, and Virginia was thought by Congress to have fielded enough generals. Jealousy and rivalry among the colonies prompted Congress to offer

¹² Biographical sketch, "The Glory of America," quoted in Graham, pp. 18-19.

¹³ Higginbotham, *op. cit.*, pp.95-97

the command to Anthony Wayne, a Pennsylvanian.”¹⁴

When Morgan learned of Wayne’s elevation to the post he coveted, he informed Washington of his decision to give up the service. Washington gave Morgan a pass to Philadelphia along with a letter to the President of Congress.

Sir: Colonel Morgan of the Virginia troops, who waits on Congress with his resignation, will have the honor of delivering you this. I cannot in justice avoid mentioning him as a very valuable officer who has rendered a series of important services and distinguished himself upon several occasions.”¹⁵

On July 18, 1779, Morgan wrote a letter of resignation to the politicians. He wrote, “I cannot therefore but feel deeply affected by injury done my reputation...I must conclude from what has happened that my country has no more occasion for me, I therefore beg leave to retire.”¹⁶

The “Hero of Saratoga,” deeply offended, slung his rifle over his shoulder and returned home to Winchester on indefinite furlough. North Callahan entitled the chapter covering this period in his biography of Morgan, “Achilles Sulks in His Tent,” a bit harshly. For Morgan had endured racking pain and tortures of rheumatism. The rigors of the Quebec campaign had caught up with him, and he needed the rest and herbal remedies. And Morgan would never be free from his back problems.

It is extremely interesting that at this juncture of his life, Morgan began to build a new home, a few miles east of Boyce, Virginia. He had purchased an estate from Mr. Blackburn, and after he returned home in 1781, he began

¹⁴ Jamie Cheaney, *Daniel Morgan*, p. 3.

¹⁵ Washington to the President of Congress, June 30, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, XV, p. 342.

¹⁶ Morgan to the President of Congress, July 18, 1779. *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 78, XV, p. 473.

construction on a house, using Hessian prisoners taken in the Battle of Saratoga and confined in Winchester. It seems naming the home "Saratoga" was a silent protest against the injustices of General Gates, who had discounted his service in the battle. Eleven miles from Winchester, this large two-story house stands today atop a rocky elevation. It is obscured by trees as one approaches the old narrow road that Morgan himself must have built. For 15 months, Morgan remained in Frederick County as a private citizen. But events that turned southward would cause yet another transition for the "old waggoner."

CHAPTER IV

A DEVIL OF A WHIPPING

1777-1781

“Great generals are scarce; there
are few Morgans.”

Nathanael Greene (after Cowpens)

As the year 1780 drew to a close, the rebellious colonies which had dared challenge the mighty British Empire were hanging on the ropes. Lord Cornwallis had won major victories at Charleston and Camden, controlled South Carolina, and stood poised to strike at Virginia; only North Carolina stood in his way.

Morgan kept in touch through correspondence with his many friends, including Horatio Gates, with whom he was not reconciled. When Gates was appointed to command the army of the South, he urged Morgan to join him as combat commander. Due to his wretched health, Morgan was in no position to respond at first. But the "old" colonel, now 48 years old, felt the call of his country when he heard the disastrous news of Gates' defeat at Camden. Morgan set out for Hillsborough, North Carolina, and arrived there in late September.

On October 7, 1780, a large body of patriots from North Carolina, Virginia, and east Tennessee caught up with 1,100 loyalists under British Major Patrick Ferguson at Kings Mountain, North Carolina. The British were demolished, and Major Ferguson killed.

By now the Continental Congress had seen the error of its ways and promoted Morgan to brigadier general. When he arrived at Charlotte on December 3, 1780, there was little to command. Of the total number present, only a little over half were ready for duty. Foraging and raiding occupied their time until the end of the year, when a change of command gave hope for the future.

General George Washington sent the very capable Nathanael Greene to take command of the southern army. Greene, just two weeks after taking command, split his army, sending General Daniel Morgan southwest to the Catawba River to cut supply lines and hamper British operations in the back country, and to "spirit up the people." Greene called Morgan's force "The Flying Army."¹⁷

Lord Cornwallis countered Greene's move by sending Colonel Banastre Tarleton to block Morgan's actions. Tarleton was only 26, but he was feared and hated, especially for his victory at the Waxhaws, where he massacred remnants

¹⁷ "I give this army the name of a Flying Army; and whilst its numbers are so small, and the enemy so much superior, it must be literally so; for they can make no opposition of consequence." Greene to Lafayette, 29 December, 1780.



Dan Morgan

Daniel Morgan, drawn by J. Herring from Col. Trumbull's sketch. Engraving found by Richard Morgan in Chestnut Hill, Pa., 1999.

of the Continental Army trying to escape. His offering of no quarter led to the derisive term "Tarleton's Quarter."

The stage was set for one of the most strategic battles of the war. On January 12, 1781, Tarleton located Morgan's army on the Pacolet River and began an aggressive pursuit in the back country of South Carolina. Morgan retreated to Thicketty Creek and then decided to make a stand at the Cowpens, a well-known crossroads and frontier pasturing ground. Some of the Overmountain Men, including Joseph McDowell and Alexander Erwin of Burke County, had camped at Cowpens on their journey to the Battle of Kings Mountain.

On the eve of the battle, Morgan moved among the campfires, offering encouragement, talking of the battle plan, and lashing out at "Bloody Ben" Tarleton and the British. By the time he was through, one soldier remarked that "the army was in good spirits and very willing to fight." Morgan hardly slept a wink all night.

The odds seemed insurmountable. Tarleton commanded 1,100 well-trained regulars, while Morgan had many raw recruits, who were known to turn tail and run in the face of well-trained British bayonets. But Daniel Morgan defied not only the odds, but all the tactical rules of battle. He took his stand on an open field with his flanks exposed, and the Broad River at his back. He knew the militia were terrified of British bayonets, so he placed them in a situation where they had to fight. Morgan said, "When men are forced to fight, they will sell their lives dearly." Morgan formed his troops in three lines, straddling the dirt road that curved through the Cowpens. The unpredictable militia were placed in the front line, promised they could withdraw after they had fired two volleys with their rifles at "killing distance." He backed them up with the more seasoned Continentals, and farthest to the rear, placed the cavalry, led by William Washington.

At the outset of the battle, sharpshooters picked off numbers of Tarleton's dragoons, and then retreated. Lawrence E. Babits claims that the role of the North Carolina militia, under the command of Colonel Joseph McDowell of Quaker Meadows has often been overlooked. "On the British left," Babits wrote, "the initial impact fell on McDowell's flanking skirmishers in a now-forgotten



RE-ENACTORS AT COWPENS, 2001

The Battle of Cowpens began at 7 am. Shown are both British Regulars and Patriots, including Burke County militia.

encounter that was critical to the American success."¹⁸ The "Lobsterbacks" surged forward, but were met by the withering fire of Morgan's second line, commanded by Andrew Pickets. The third line, made up of John Eager Howard's Continentals, continued the onslaught. The telling moment came when William Washington's patriot cavalry thundered on the field of battle, seemingly out of nowhere. Morgan, riding in front, rallied the militia, crying out, "Form, form, my brave fellows. Morgan was never beaten."¹⁹

A strange thing then happened. Morgan ordered the retreating units to face about and fire in unison. The firing took a heavy toll on the British, who at that time had sensed victory and had broken ranks in a wild charge. The fierce patriot bayonet charge in return broke the British charge. The re-formed militia and cavalry re-entered the battle, and the British infantry began surrendering en masse.

The battle was over. In less than an hour, the patriots had won a staggering victory. British losses were 110 dead, 200 wounded, and 500 captured. Morgan lost only 12 killed and 60 wounded. In Morgan's own words, he gave Tarleton and the British a "devil of a whipping." Tarleton escaped with only 50 troopers and a shattered reputation.

Word of the stunning victory "flew from south to north like a shock of electricity, revived our languish hopes, and strung our sinews for the contest," recalled Reverend Hill. One British historian commented that "Tarleton lost the battle that lost the campaign that lost the war that lost the American colonies." Morgan's victory at the Cowpens cannot be minimized for its impact on the final American victory. In chasing Morgan, Cornwallis depleted his supplies and was forced to give up hope of conquering North Carolina. No doubt Cowpens was a significant moment that led to the eventual defeat of the British at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, while the British band played "The World Turned Upside Down."

Morgan knew Cornwallis would pursue him, so after burying his dead (the legend says in wolf pits), he headed north at noon of that same day and

¹⁸ Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, p. 106.

¹⁹ James B. Collins, *Autobiography of a Revolutionary War Soldier*, John Roberts (ed.), Clinton, La., 1859, p. 59.



Major Joseph McDowell served with the Burke Militia at Cowpens



Medal awarded to General Daniel Morgan after the Battle of Cowpens, finally presented in 1790 by Thomas Jefferson.



proceeded to Gilbert Town (the present Rutherfordton) and then pressed swiftly northeast toward the Catawba River. Daniel Barefoot believes that Morgan's flight from Cornwallis took him to present-day Morganton in Burke County, and then to Sherrills Ford.²⁰ He arrived at Sherrills Ford with a large portion of his army in late January. Barefoot adds, "Morgan's entourage—850 American soldiers, 500 British prisoners, 800 horses, 40 wagons, and two captured wagons—stretched along area roads for more than two miles. It was a spectacle few residents ever forgot."²¹ Soon Morgan and Greene reunited, and shortly thereafter, Morgan had to retire from duty. His rheumatism had flared up again, and to that was added the misery of hemorrhoids. After a week on the road, he could ride his horse no longer and had to make the long journey back to "Saratoga" by carriage.

Scott Withrow, Park Ranger at Cowpens National Battlefield, says that "Morgan's unorthodox but tactical masterpiece had indeed 'spirited up' the people, not only those of the back country Carolinas, but those in all the colonies."²²

DANIEL MORGAN'S ESCAPE FROM CORNWALLIS

Although Daniel Morgan had won a major victory at Cowpens, he knew the only way to preserve that victory was to escape Cornwallis. So Morgan decided to retreat towards the fords of the Catawba River in North Carolina, where he expected militia reinforcements under General Davidson and where he hoped to hear from Nathanael Greene. Morgan's route holds much interest for the town of Morganton, later named for the General. Did Morgan ever reach the place which is now Morganton in Burke County? Daniel Barefoot thinks he did. He writes, "General Daniel Morgan began a retreat to escape the wrath of

²⁰ Daniel W. Barefoot, *Touring North Carolina's Revolutionary War Sites*, Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1998, p. 245.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

²² Scott Withrow, *The Battle of Cowpens*, unpublished manuscript, p. 4.

Cornwallis's full army. Morgan's flight took him to Morganton [sic]...²³ However, reconstruction of that escape raises questions as to whether Morgan ever came through the present town of Morganton.²⁴

On January 17, 1781, Morgan left the Cowpens at noon, and crossed the north side of the Broad River at Cherokee Ford. He sent Colonel Pickens' militia with the British prisoners into the higher country. On January 18, Morgan marched into Gilbert Town (near the present town of Rutherfordton). Marching 100 miles in five days, Morgan and his troops reached Sherrills Ford on January 23, where they camped and waited for Greene's army.

Greene arrived at Morgan's camp at Sherrills Ford on January 30, and on January 31, Greene, Morgan, William Davidson, and William Washington met on the left bank of the Catawba River at Beattie's Ford. (Across the Catawba on the right bank were Cornwallis and his forces.)

Although Morgan wanted to engage Cornwallis there, Greene decided that General Davidson would encounter the British at Cowans Ford, while Greene and Morgan fled to Salisbury. On February 1, at the Battle of Cowans Ford, Davidson was killed and British won the day, but the bravery of Davidson and his 800 militia against Cornwallis's 2,500 troops gave Morgan and Greene time to escape the British army. Davidson's ultimate sacrifice gave the patriot army the critical head start it needed to reach the Yadkin River, and get across the river in boats before the first elements of Cornwallis's army, commanded by Charles O'Hara, arrived there on the night of February 2.

Morgan arrived in Salisbury on February 2, and knew he "had one more river to cross," the Yadkin River. They crossed the Yadkin seven miles from Salisbury at Trading Ford, and began the 47-mile trek to Guilford Court House, where they arrived on February 3.

Morgan was in great pain and wrote to General Greene that he must resign and return home.

I am not unacquainted with the hurt my retiring

²³ Barefoot, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

²⁴ Based on research by Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Court House*, and Morrill, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*.

will be to the service, as the people have much confidence in me; but the love I have for my country, and the willingness I have always showed to serve it, will convince you that nothing would be wanting on my side were I able to serve. So that I must beg leave of absence, till I find myself able to take the field again.²⁵

On February 10, Morgan left for Fredericksburg in a carriage with two slaves, "Nat" and "Toby," captured at the Battle of Cowpens, both of whom were to serve him the rest of his life. Behind him was four months' service with the Southern army in the Carolinas, and that outstanding patriot victory at Cowpens.

Congress voted to create a medal for Morgan, and Thomas Jefferson lent his support. The inscription was to read:

That the thanks of the United States in Congress assembled, be given to Brigadier General Morgan, and the officers and men under his command, for their fortitude and good conduct, displayed in the actions at Cowpens, in the state of South Carolina, on the 17th of January last.

March 1781

It took nine years before Morgan actually received the medal.

²⁵ Morgan to Greene (Greene papers) cited in Chalmers Davidson, *Piedmont Partisan*, (Davidson College, 1951).

CHAPTER V

SARATOGA AND FINAL DAYS

1800-1802

“No man better loved this world
and no man more reluctantly
quitted it.”

Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee



"Saratoga," the home Morgan built at Boyce, Virginia, in the late 18th century, where he lived after the Battle of Cowpens.

Morgan recovered from his ailments sufficiently to take the field briefly assisting his friend the Marquis de Lafayette in a Virginia skirmish that eventually led to Yorktown. Even that proved too much for him, and he retired in July of 1781 and settled in at "Saratoga." The decade that followed saw Morgan's becoming one of the most distinguished men of the Shenandoah Valley. In 1782 Morgan and Nathaniel Burwell operated a mill in Milltown. Morgan managed the mill, while Burwell looked after a nearby store.

Morgan was called to arms one last time to help put down the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania, an uprising of back country farmers incensed over a federal tax on distilled grounds. He served one term in the fifth Congress (1797-99) representing the Federalist party, but one term was enough. Morgan enjoyed the marriages of his daughters, Nancy to Colonel Presley Neville, an aide to Lafayette, and Betsy to Major James Heard, who became a reckless spender. It is significant that Heard resembled the young Daniel Morgan and Neville the mature general. Morgan took great delight as a doting grandfather.

Nancy Neville gave birth to fifteen children and Betsy Heard to four children. Morgan often brought his grandchildren to "Saratoga" and entertained them with stories of his military career. "Saratoga" became a center of historic interest. (It is reported that General Robert E. Lee later spent some time at the house on his way to the Battle of Gettysburg.) However, a year before he retired from Congress, Morgan's lameness made it too difficult to look after "Saratoga." In the summer of 1800, Morgan needed constant medical attention, so he moved in with Betsy Heard's family at their home at 226 Amherst Street in Winchester.

FINAL YEARS IN WINCHESTER

It was during those last two years in Winchester that the Rev. William Hill became Morgan's constant friend and confidant. Abigail Morgan had been one of the 50 charter members of the Old Stone Presbyterian Church in Winchester, and Morgan was baptized and became a member there in 1801.

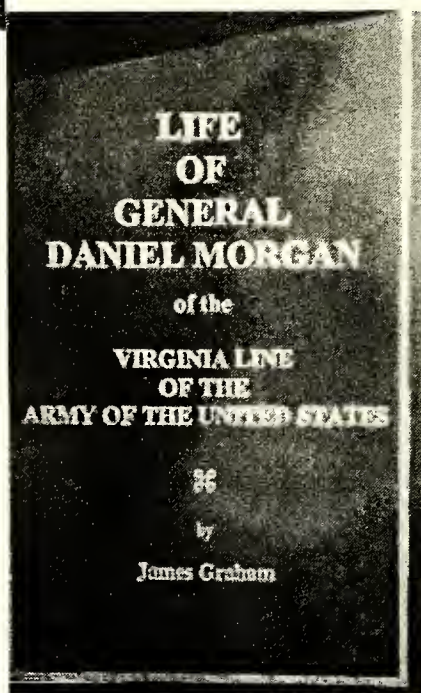
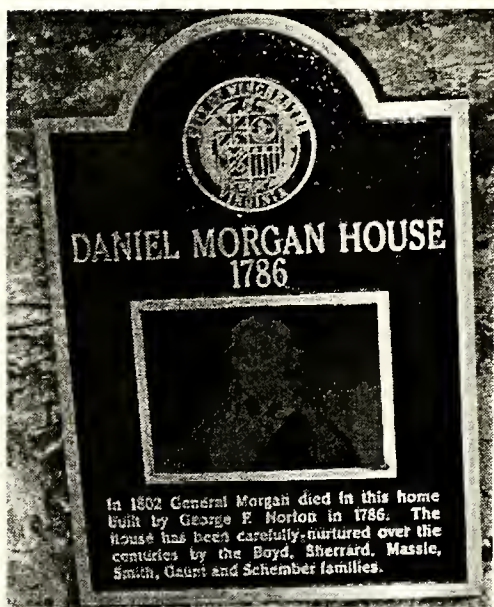
Callahan describes Morgan's faith statement in the following words:

I believe in one God, the first and great cause of all goodness. I also believe in Jesus Christ, the rebirth of the world. I also believe in the Holy Ghost, the



LEFT: Home of Morgan's daughter Betsy Heard on Amherst St. in Winchester, where he lived 1800-1802, and died July 6, 1802.

BELOW: Earliest biography of Daniel Morgan by James Graham, published in 1856.



comforter...I further believe that all must be saved
through the merits of Christ.²⁶

This brief statement of faith indicates that Morgan stood in the traditional evangelical tradition, much different from the Deism of Jefferson, Paine and Franklin. Deism, then popular with the French Revolutionists, was to Morgan incompatible with the "true religion." Although Morgan embraced the politics of these revolutionary figures, he never embraced their religion.

Daniel Morgan was a man of prayer. "People thought Old Morgan was never afraid," he told William Hill, relating his prayers before the battles of Quebec and Cowpens. At Quebec, in the long night while they waited through storm and darkness to storm the city, Morgan thought that nothing less than a miracle could save them from sure disaster. He stepped aside, and kneeling at the side of ammunition of war, prayed most fervently that Almighty God would be his shield and defense. He continued in prayer as the word passed down the line, and later fully believed that his safety was the intervention of God. At Cowpens, once again facing seemingly sure defeat, Morgan went into the woods, knelt by an old tree stump, and poured out a prayer for his army, himself, and his country.

In 1801, Morgan signed his final will and testament, which was probated in September of 1802.²⁷ As Morgan approached his end, his physician, Dr. Conrad, told him to settle his affairs. Morgan replied, "Doctor, if I could be the man I was when I was 21 years of age [1757], I would be willing to be stripped stark naked on the top of the Allegheny Mountains to run for my life with the

²⁶ Callahan, *op.cit.*, p. 293. See also, Morgan to Miles Fisher, June 11, 1798, *Historical Magazine*, 1st Series, 2 (1868). Hill's Notes, p. 266.

²⁷ Graham, *op.cit.*, pp. 460-462. The will was probated on September 30, 1802, and left land to be sold for the benefit of his wife Abigail, "Saratoga" and other land to daughter Betsy, his lands in Kentucky to Betsy's four children, and his military lands in the Northwest Territory to his son-in-law Presley Neville. (Frederick County Wills, SC I, p. 435.)

hounds of death at my heels.”²⁸

The Rev. James Quinn visited Morgan on his death bed and shared the plan of salvation. Quinn’s comment was, “How little can the honors and riches of the world do for poor man when death comes.” Surrounded by his family and friends, Daniel Morgan quietly slipped to the next world on July 6, 1802. The Rev. William Hill preached a long and eloquent funeral oration. Among his words were these:

He was the complete soldier. I think we may venture to assert, that he has not left another behind him to whom we are so much indebted for our independence and liberty. Whilst we sit under our own vine and fig tree, with none to make us afraid - whilst the liberty he had contributed so large to procure for us gilds our path through life, gladdens every scene and makes yon sun itself to shine with luster the name of MORGAN will be precious in our sights. Posterity itself shall know thy name, and knowing it, learn to imitate thy patriotism and bravery. Beloved Patriot and Hero, we bid thee farewell.²⁹

It was fitting that Hill deliver Morgan’s funeral oration. The Reverend William E. Hill (1769-1852) had become the first pastor of the Old Stone Presbyterian Church, organized on September 7, 1800. A meaningful coincidence was that Hill came to Winchester on January 1, 1800, around the same time that Morgan moved to Winchester. Hill served the church for 34 years, and was buried in Mount Hebron Cemetery, near Morgan’s second and

²⁸ Col. David Holmes, “Early History of Winchester,” *Annual Papers of Winchester, Virginia, Historical Society*, Winchester, Va., 1931, I, pp. 171-172.

²⁹ William Hill, manuscript in the library of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

final grave site.³⁰

In the funeral procession were seven members of the original rifle company which Morgan had formed and marched to Boston in 1775. They carried their war-worn rifles, and after the body had been lowered into the grave, they stood over it and fired a farewell which resounded across the valley. Over the grave was placed a stone slab, and on it was an inscription written by General Presley Neville:

Major General Daniel Morgan
Departed this life
On July 6, 1802
In the 67th year of his age
Patriotism and Valor
Were the prominent features of his character
And the Honorable services he Rendered to His Country
During the Revolutionary War
Crowned him with Glory
And will remain in the hearts of his countrymen
A Perpetual Monument to His Memory³¹

³⁰ Robert Lee Woodworth, *A History of Winchester Presbytery*, 1947.

³¹ See replica of Memorial Slab in photo taken in 2000.

CHAPTER VI

DANIEL MORGAN: RECONSIDERED HERO

“The welfare of the country seemed to absorb his soul.”

“We may venture to assert, that he has not left another behind him to whom we are so much indebted for our Independence and Liberty.”

The Reverend William Hill

At the end of the Civil War in 1865, rumors went around Winchester that the victorious Yankees intended to dig up the remains of Morgan, who was born in the North, and move them to Pennsylvania. Colonel William R. Denny of Winchester led prominent local citizens to the Old Stone Presbyterian Church cemetery, and dug up the remains of Morgan. Only the bones of the old soldier remained. They were re-interred in the Mount Hebron Cemetery in Winchester, where they remain today.

In July 1951, citizens from Spartanburg, South Carolina, appeared at the Mount Hebron Cemetery in an attempt to move Morgan's remains to Spartanburg. But when the delegation, armed with picks and shovels, appeared at the cemetery, the caretaker called the police. A crowd of Winchester "patriots" gathered at the cemetery and adamantly opposed the South Carolinians.

Life magazine described the incident in an article entitled, "Who Gets the General's Body?"³² Even after his demise, Daniel Morgan could not rest at peace, and remained the center of controversy.

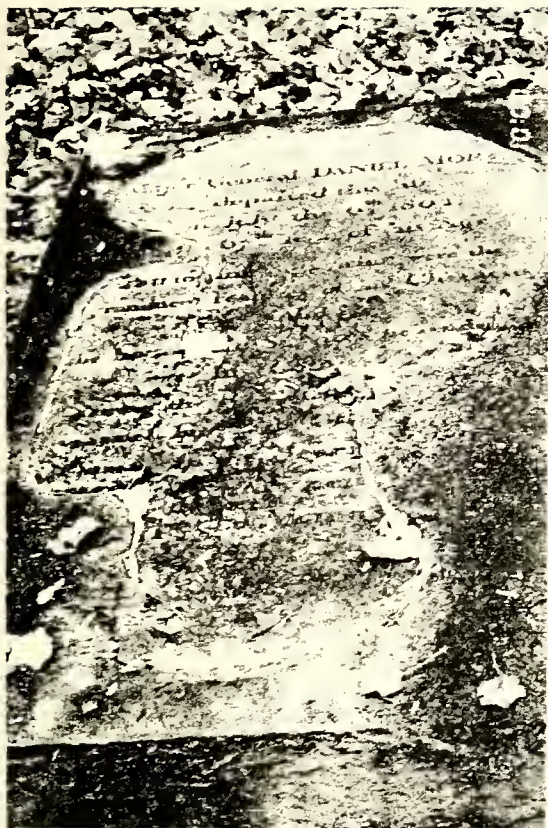
EPILOGUE

The year 2002 marks the bicentennial of General Daniel Morgan's death. His biographer James Graham wrote of Morgan,

He was remarkable through life for his candor, whether the occasion for the exercise of this quality was agreeable or not to his hearers. He was never known to sacrifice truth to conventionality. He abhorred the character of a hypocrite or dissembler, and never took any pains to conceal his contempt for the dishonest, the treacherous, the cowardly.³³

³² *Life*, September 3, 1951, pp. 53-54

³³ Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 454



Morgan's grave marker with inscription written by his son-in-law General Presley Neville at the Mount Hebron Cemetery.

Monument erected by the Winchester/Frederick County Historical Society at Mount Hebron Cemetery in 1952.

WILLOUGHBY MORGAN

Higginbotham says, "It is not generally known that Morgan also had a son. Born in the mid-1780's, Willoughby Morgan was illegitimate, and his mother's identity remains a mystery. His birth so embarrassed Morgan that he never referred to Willoughby in his surviving letters or his will."³⁴ Apparently the boy resembled his father physically and emulated him in compiling a brilliant combat record in the War of 1812. Higginbotham says that "...at a very early age Willoughby was sent to South Carolina, where he grew up and studied law. By 1811 he lived in Winchester, and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the army, and after serving at western posts in Indiana and Wisconsin, he died in 1832."³⁵

Every family has its "black sheep and kissing cousins." The parentage of Willoughby was a well-kept secret and Morgan guarded that secret well.

Granted this impropriety, Morgan remains a major figure in American history. Oliver Wendall Holmes once wrote, "A great man represents a strategic point in the campaign of history and part of his greatness consists in being there." At those crucial moments at Quebec, Saratoga, and Cowpens, Morgan's presence was felt.

Clint Schemmer, writing in the Fredericksburg, Virginia, *Free Lance Star*, laments the fact that Morgan has received so little mention outside of Winchester, Virginia. But he notes there is one place where Morgan has received his reward. In the halls of the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, Morgan's portrait hangs with other Virginia heroes of the Revolution—Washington, Jefferson, Madison—and Lafayette. Overhead the display reads "The World

³⁴ Higginbotham, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

³⁵ *Ibid.* In the Draper manuscripts at the State Historical Society of the University of Wisconsin (216-219), one of Morgan's granddaughters, Mrs. Winifred Kouns, recalls that, "Colonel Willoughby Morgan was a natural son of General Daniel Morgan and was born in Winchester in 1785 [sic.] He was reared by a foster mother in South Carolina at his father's expense.

Turned Upside Down."³⁶

Daniel Morgan was a hero of the Revolution. He had personal relationships with many of its major personalities: Washington, Gates, Greene, Arnold, Lafayette, and Jefferson. James Graham well said, "It is a little mysterious that there is no credit given him for those exploits in the American history of the Revolution, while in some of the British accounts, his name is mentioned with great honour and applause. *I am still in hopes that this business will be enquired into by some future historian, and justice done to his memory.*"³⁷ I trust that as we commemorate the 200th year since his death, justice is now done to his memory. Morgan never lived in Morganton, North Carolina, but probably marched through this area on his way to Guilford Court House in late January 1781. But his leadership at Cowpens so influenced McDowell and Erwin, that they gave this town his name.

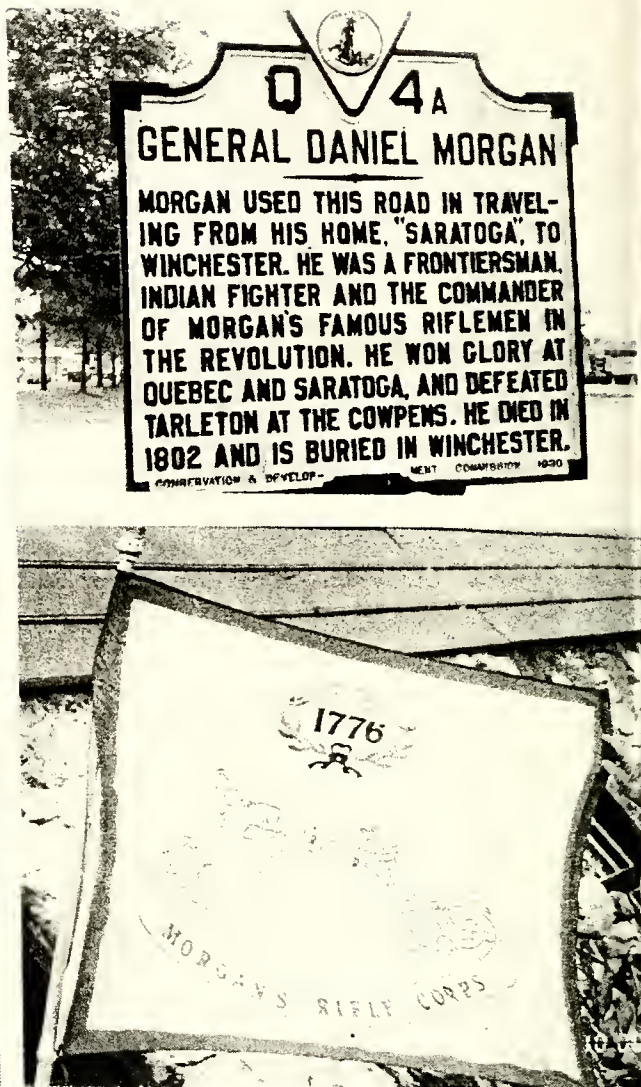
Standing by his grave in Mount Hebron Cemetery, Winchester, Virginia, on a gray October afternoon, almost 200 years since his death, I felt a kinship with this patriot and great American. The words of the hymn filled my soul:

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears
America, America
God shed his grace on thee,
And crowned thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

Daniel, this patriot whose dreams of freedom saw beyond the years, is the man for whom Morganton is named. Soon after the Revolution ended, Morgan was given a blank form on which to register information as to the extent

³⁶ Clint Schemmer, "Daniel Morgan: Patriot with an Attitude," Fredericksburg, Va. *Free Lance Star*, August 4, 2000.

³⁷ James Graham, in a manuscript at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.



Shown above are the monument to Daniel Morgan erected by Congress in the main square of Spartanburg, South Carolina , with the inscription, "General Daniel Morgan, the hero of Cowpens, who on the field was victorious in the great cause of American independence"; the road marker erected by the state of Virginia outside Winchester, Virginia; and the official flag of Captain Morgan's XI th Rifle Corps, 1776.

of his services. He really wrote his own epitaph, the root metaphor of his life. Morgan wrote, "*Fought everywhere; surrendered nowhere.*" We shall not see the likes of this patriot any time soon.

GENEALOGY OF DANIEL MORGAN

James and Eleanor Morgan
(came from Wales, 1720)

DANIEL MORGAN

b. 1736

(Durham, Bucks County, Pa., or Hunterdon County, N.J.)

m. Abigail Curry (1743-1816)

March 30, 1773

d. July 6, 1802

(Winchester, Va.)

Nancy (1763-1831)

m. Presley Neville (1755-1818)

October 15, 1782

15 children, including

Major LaFayette Morgan Neville b. 1783

Frederick Neville, b. 1801

Betsy (1769-?)

m. James Heard (1767-1827)

October 16, 1786

Five children, including

Daniel Morgan Heard

Morgan Augustus Heard

Matilda Heard

Nancy Heard

Illegitimate son by unknown mother

Willoughby (1780-1831)

MILITARY CAREER OF DANIEL MORGAN

1775	Captain, 11 th Virginia Regiment	age 39
1776	Colonel, Continental Army	age 40
1780	Brigadier General, Continental Army	age 44

FOR FURTHER READING

Three biographies of Morgan still in print:

Callahan, North, *Daniel Morgan: Ranger of the Revolution*. New York, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961.

Graham, James, *Life of General Daniel Morgan of the Virginia Line of the Army of the United States*. First edition published in 1856. Reprinted by Zebrowski Historical Services Publishing Co., Bloomingburg, NY, 1993.

Higginbotham, Don, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961.

Related reading:

Babits, Lawrence E., *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Buchanan, John, *The Road to Guilford Court House: The American Revolution in the Carolinas*. New York: John Wiley, 1997.

Ketchum, Richard M., *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997.

Phifer, Edward W., Jr., *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County, 1777-1920*. Morganton, NC, 1982.

Roberts, Kenneth, *The Battle of Cowpens: The Great Morale Builder*. New York: Doubleday, 1958.

CHILDREN'S READING

(Available at the Morganton/Burke County Public Library)

Bryant, Bernice, *Dan Morgan: Wilderness Boy*. New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1952, 1962.

Tucker, Ernest E., *Dan Morgan, Rifleman*. Chicago: Wheeler Publishing Company, 1955.

Cover art: Daniel Morgan, ca. 1794, by Charles Willson Peale. Courtesy of Independence National Park, Philadelphia.

All photographs by the author.

DANIEL MORGAN: Reconsidered Hero

The year 2002 marks the Bicentennial year of the death of General Daniel Morgan, Patriot of the Revolutionary War. This monograph was written to remember the often neglected role Morgan played in strategic battles of the War of Independence, and as a tribute to the Burke Militia who fought with Morgan at the Battle of Cowpens.



"As Mayor of the City of Morganton, I commend this book to all our citizens who wish to know more about the man for whom our city is named. As Americans we owe a debt of gratitude to patriots such as Morgan whose loyalty and courage gave us our independence."

- Mayor Mel Cohen -

"Daniel Morgan is hardly known as a Revolutionary hero today, but contemporaries considered his experience and talents as legendary."

- Dr. Lawrence E. Babits, Author of *A Devil of a Whipping*.

**THIS IS AN IDEAL BOOK FOR
CITIZENS OF MORGANTON AND
HISTORIANS AND STUDENTS OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**



Richard L. Morgan, a student of the life of Daniel Morgan, and author of ten books, holds a doctorate in church history, and is an active member of the Burke County Historical Society, and Historic Burke Foundation.